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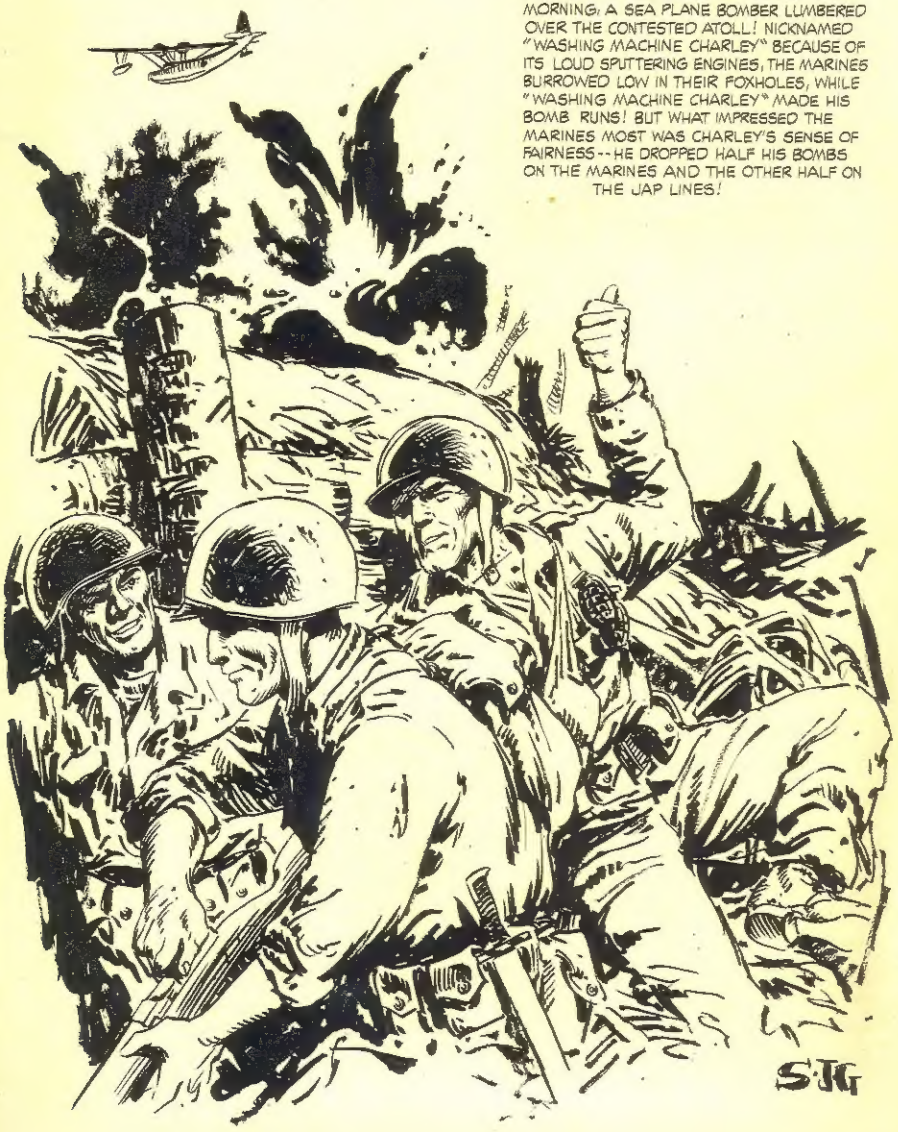
AIR WAR STORIES

DESTROY THE ENEMY'S ACE!

AIR WAR STORIES

MILK RUN

EVEN GRIM COMBAT HAS ITS HUMOROUS MOMENTS AND AT TARAWA, THE JAPS UNWITTINGLY PROVIDED THE FUN! NIGHTLY, ALMOST ON SCHEDULE AT FOUR IN THE MORNING, A SEA PLANE BOMBER LUMBERED OVER THE CONTESTED ATOLL! NICKNAMED "WASHING MACHINE CHARLEY" BECAUSE OF ITS LOUD SPUTTERING ENGINES, THE MARINES BURROWED LOW IN THEIR FOXHOLES, WHILE "WASHING MACHINE CHARLEY" MADE HIS BOMB RUNS! BUT WHAT IMPRESSED THE MARINES MOST WAS CHARLEY'S SENSE OF FAIRNESS--HE DROPPED HALF HIS BOMBS ON THE MARINES AND THE OTHER HALF ON THE JAP LINES!



THIS IS THE TALE OF A MAN AND A MIRACULOUS PLANE THAT ALWAYS BROUGHT HIM HOME SAFELY...

JUNE 2, 1940--THE AIR OVER THE BEACH AT DUNKIRK WAS LASHED WITH ROPES OF ORANGE TRACERS AS A MOB OF THE LUFTWAFFE'S FINEST CAME SCREAMING IN AT WHAT SOON WOULD BE...
The HURRICANE THAT WASN'T
BLIMEY! LOOK AT ALL THOSE KRAUTS AGAINST JUST ONE LITTLE HURRICANE!
POOR BLOKE! HE'LL NEVER GET HOME!
SAM J. GLANZMAN

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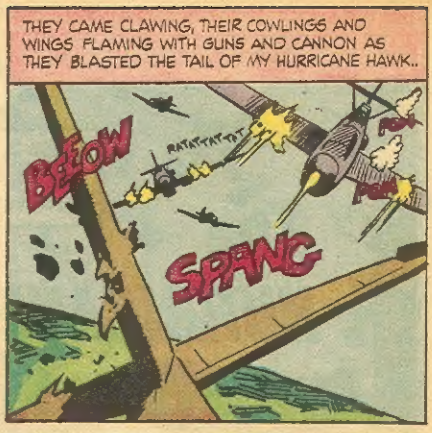
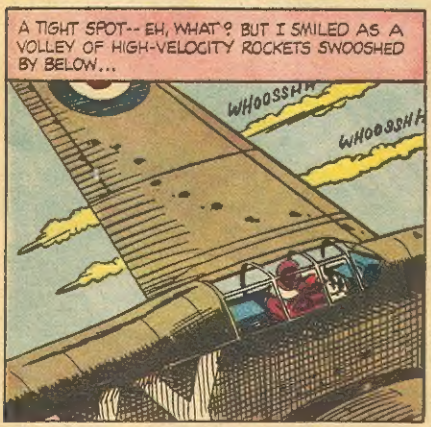
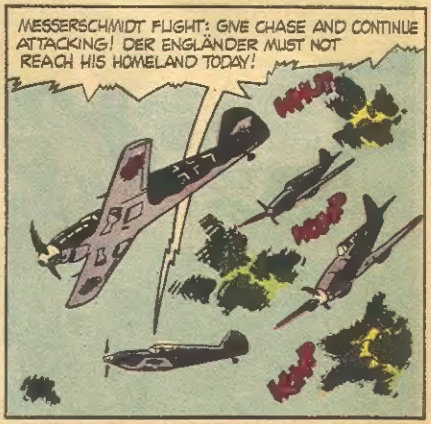
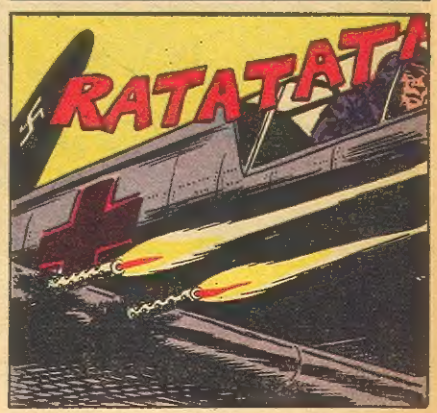
A SPLIT-SECOND AGO I AND MY HURRICANE WERE ALL ALONE...


THEY CAME CLAWING, THEIR COWLINGS AND WINGS FLAMING WITH GUNS AND CANNON AS THEY BLASTED THE TAIL OF MY HURRICANE HAWK..
BELOW
RATAT-TAT-TAT
SPANG


A TIGHT SPOT-- EH, WHAT? BUT I SMILED AS A VOLLEY OF HIGH-VELOCITY ROCKETS SWOOSHED BY BELOW...
WHOOSSH
WHOOOSH


MESSERSCHMIDT FLIGHT: GIVE CHASE AND CONTINUE ATTACKING! DER ENGLÄNDER MUST NOT REACH HIS HOMELAND TODAY!
WHUT
WHOOF
WHUT

I WAS STILL SMILING WHEN--


RATATAT

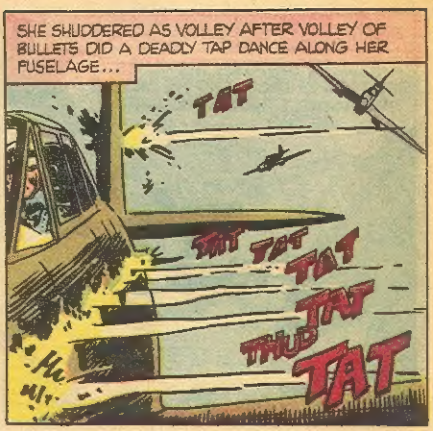
YOU'LL NEED A BEAUTY TREATMENT WHEN WE GET THERE, OLD HURRICANE... BUT YOU'LL GET ME HOME SAFELY! YOU'LL NEVER LET ME DOWN!
VROOOOM
TOO BAD ABOUT THOSE CHAPS DOWN ON THE BEACH! THEY NEED ALL THE AIR-COVER THEY CAN GET! BUT ORDERS ARE ORDERS...
...AND WE WERE ORDERED TO EVACUATE TODAY!
CHERIO, BRADLEY. SEE YOU BACK IN ENGLAND, OLD MAN.
B-BUT, SIR--
NO BUTS! THAT'S AN ORDER, BRADLEY! PANZER TROOPS ARE CLOSING IN...THEY'LL OVERRUN THE AIRDROME BY NIGHTFALL. EVACUATE YOUR SQUADRON AT ONCE, AND REGROUP IN ENGLAND!
FRANCE
I DARESAY THE NAVY HAS THAT SITUATION WELL IN HAND. NOW STEP LIVELY, BRADLEY...HOP TO IT. SEE YOU BACK IN PICADILLY.
BUT WHAT ABOUT OUR MEN ON THE BEACH, SIR?

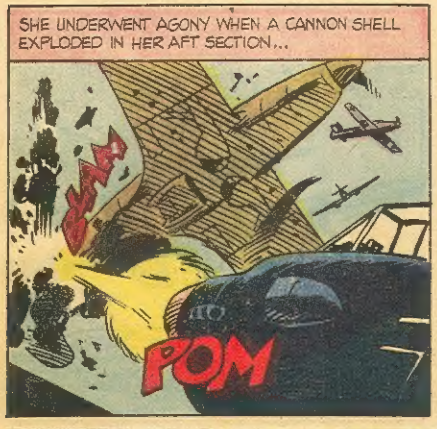
I HAD NO CHOICE. I HAD TO GIVE ORDERS TO BURN ALL UNREPAIRABLE HURRICANES ON THE GROUND...
I GLUMLY WATCHED MY GROUND CREWS GO OFF IN TRANSPORT PLANES...
HURRICANE'S ALL READY TO GO, SIR? WILL YOU BE LEADING THE SQUADRON HOME?
NOT THIS TIME, LIEUTENANT. DON'T WAIT FOR ME...I'LL BE TODDLING ALONG AS SOON AS I MAKE A LAST CHECK OF THE AIRDROME.
WE'LL CATCH UP WITH THEM, OLD FRIEND. YOU'LL GET ME HOME SAFELY! WE'VE BEEN IN WORSE SPOTS THAN THIS...AND YOU'VE NEVER LET ME DOWN YET!
JUST THEN---
OH-OH. COMPANY'S COMING... SOONER THAN WE EXPECTED!
HOME, HURRICANE! HOME!
WHROOOM
BLAM
POW
POW
BLAM

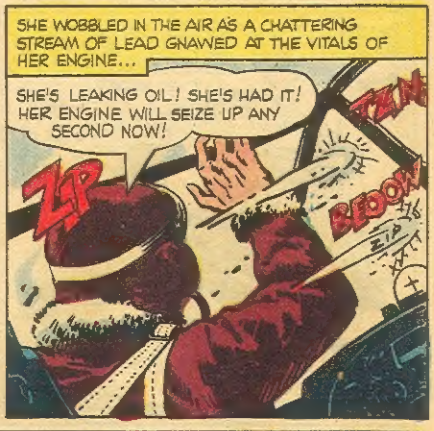
THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE SQUADRON WHEN WE GOT UPSTAIRS. BUT WE WEREN'T ALONE VERY LONG...
M.E. 109'S AT 3 O'CLOCK!
VY
JUST A FEW SHELL HOLES HERE AND THERE, OLD FRIEND...BUT I'M NOT WORRIED. YOU'LL GET ME HOME SAFELY.
BUT THEN ANOTHER FLIGHT OF NAZI BUZZARDS CAME THUNDERING OUT OF THE CLOUDS...
RATAT-TAT-TAT
RATAT-TAT-A
PULLING BACK ON THE STICK, I TILTED MY HURRICANE INTO A STEEP CLIMB...
BULLSEYE, GOOSESTEPPER!...BUT WRONG TARGET!
RATATAT
RAT-TAT-TAT
BLAM
STUBBORN ROTTERS, AREN'T THEY, OLD FRIEND? BUT THEY'LL NEVER STOP US. YOU'LL GET HOME...YOU'LL MANAGE IT SOMEHOW...

"REMEMBER THAT FOG-SHROUDED DAY WHEN A BARRAGE-BALLOON CABLE SLICED OFF HALF YOUR WING? WHAT HAPPENED...?"
"YOU BROUGHT ME HOME SAFELY."
"THEN THERE WAS THE TIME YOU WERE BRACKETED BY THAT FLAKWAGEN. WHAT HAPPENED...?
"BATTERED AND SHATTERED AND RUDDERLESS, YOU BROUGHT ME HOME SAFELY."
POM
POM
POM
POM
NO, OLD FRIEND, YOU'LL NEVER LET ME DOWN---
OH-OH! MORE PIRATES! A WHOLE MOB OF THEM!
RATATAT
TATATA

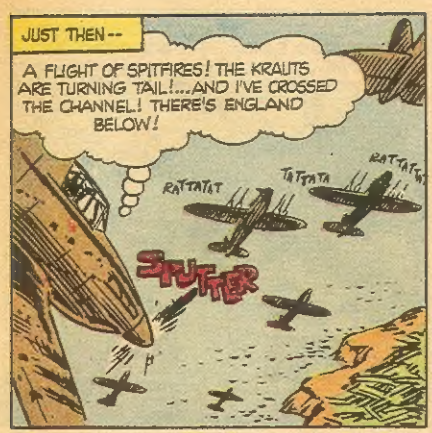
MY HURRICANE ROCKED IN VIOLENT EVASIVE ACTION...
THUD
KRANG
BAM
THUMP

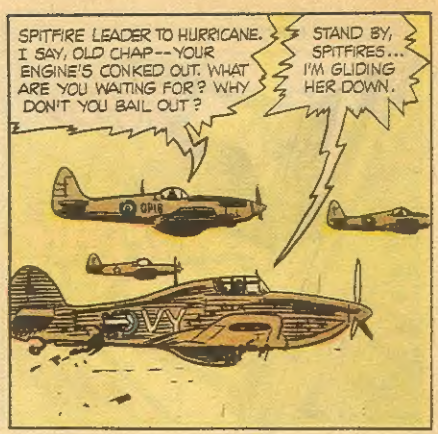

SHE SHUDDERED AS VOLLEY AFTER VOLLEY OF BULLETS DID A DEADLY TAP DANCE ALONG HER FUSELAGE...
TAT
TAT
TAT
TAT
THUD
TAT
TAT


SHE UNDERWENT AGONY WHEN A CANNON SHELL EXPLODED IN HER AFT SECTION...
KAWAM
POM

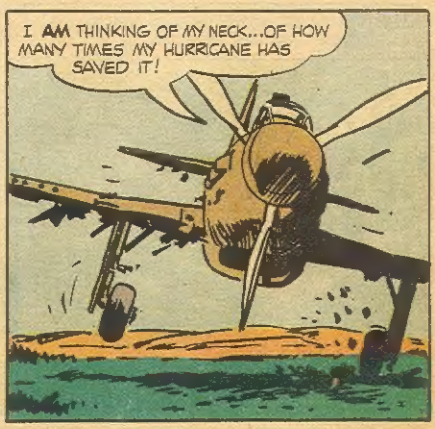

SHE WOBBLED IN THE AIR AS A CHATTERING STREAM OF LEAD GNAWED AT THE VITALS OF HER ENGINE...
SHE'S LEAKING OIL! SHE'S HAD IT! HER ENGINE WILL SEIZE UP ANY SECOND NOW!
ZIP
ZZIN
BLOOM

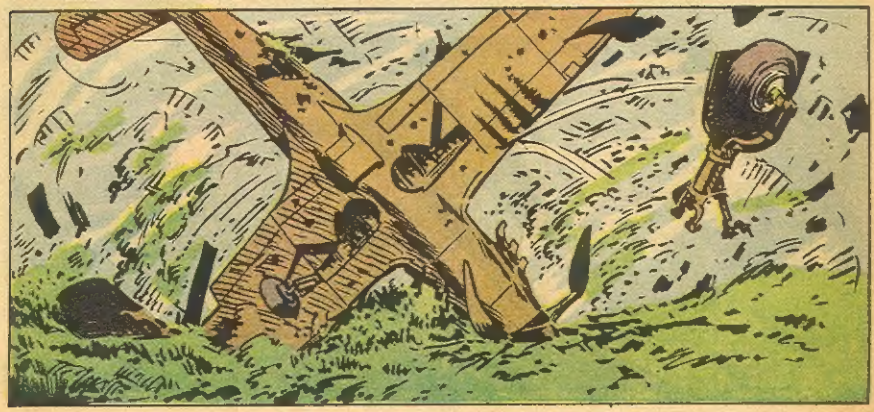
NOW, THE ENEMY PLANES BUNCHED UP—READY TO COME IN FOR THE KILL.

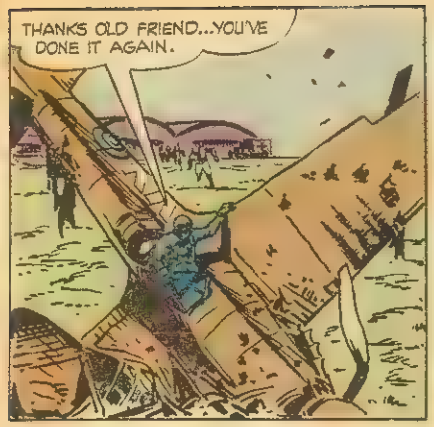

JUST THEN--
A FLIGHT OF SPITFIRES! THE KRAUTS ARE TURNING TAIL!...AND I'VE CROSSED THE CHANNEL! THERE'S ENGLAND BELOW!
RATTATAT
TATTATA
RATTATAT
SPUTTER

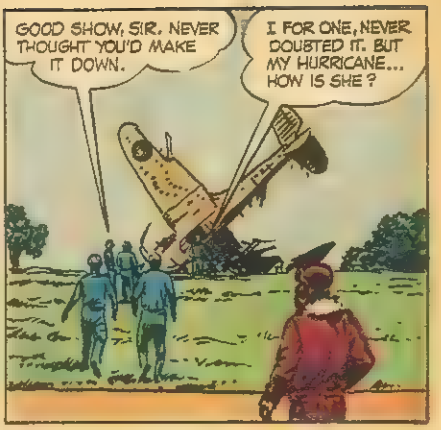

SPITFIRE LEADER TO HURRICANE. I SAY, OLD CHAP--YOUR ENGINE'S CONKED OUT. WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? WHY DON'T YOU BAIL OUT?
STAND BY, SPITFIRES... I'M GLIDING HER DOWN.

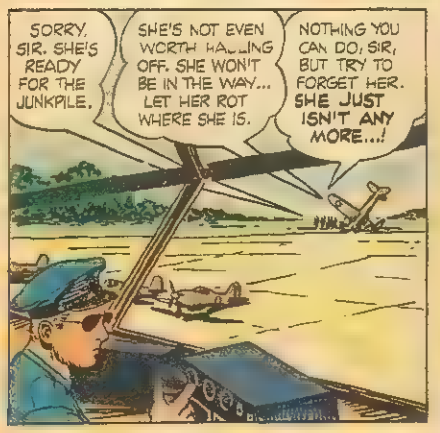
GLIDING HER DOWN?!
BAIL OUT, MAN! BAIL OUT! THE PLANE'S BEYOND REPAIR!..THINK OF YOUR OWN NECK!


I AM THINKING OF MY NECK...OF HOW MANY TIMES MY HURRICANE HAS SAVED IT!



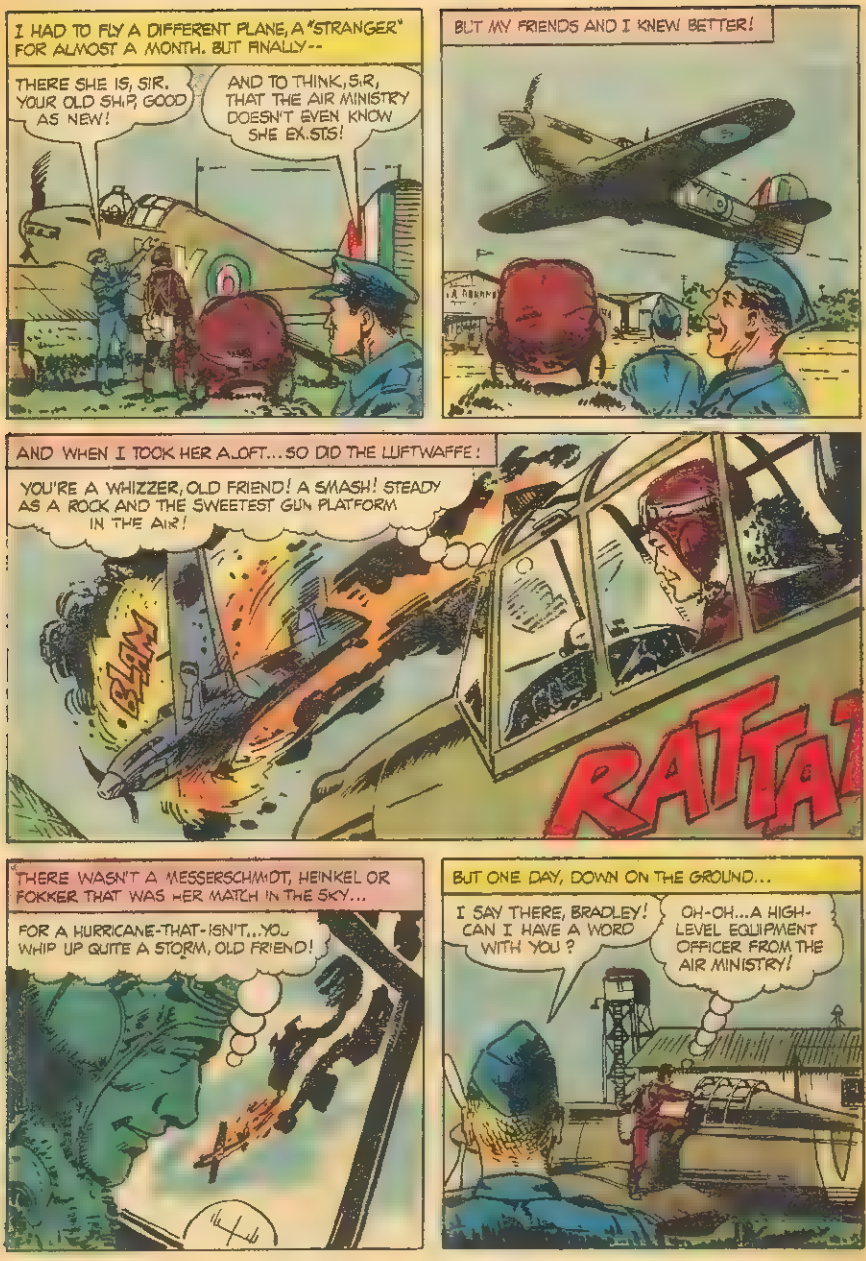

THANKS OLD FRIEND...YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN.


GOOD SHOW, SIR. NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D MAKE IT DOWN.
I FOR ONE, NEVER DOUBTED IT. BUT MY HURRICANE... HOW IS SHE?


SORRY, SIR. SHE'S READY FOR THE JUNKPILE.
SHE'S NOT EVEN WORTH HAULING OFF. SHE WON'T BE IN THE WAY... LET HER ROT WHERE SHE IS.
NOTHING YOU CAN DO, SIR, BUT TRY TO FORGET HER. SHE JUST ISN'T ANY MORE...!

LET HER ROT? AFTER ALL THE TIMES SHE'S BROUGHT ME HOME SAFELY?... NOT LIKELY!

ABOUT A WEEK LATER, ONE MOONLESS NIGHT..
EASY THERE...EASY...


I HAD TO FLY A DIFFERENT PLANE, A "STRANGER" FOR ALMOST A MONTH. BUT FINALLY--
THERE SHE IS, SIR. YOUR OLD SHIP, GOOD AS NEW!
AND TO THINK, SIR, THAT THE AIR MINISTRY DOESN'T EVEN KNOW SHE EXISTS!
BUT MY FRIENDS AND I KNEW BETTER!
AND WHEN I TOOK HER ALOFT... SO DID THE LUFTWAFFE!
YOU'RE A WHIZZER, OLD FRIEND! A SMASH! STEADY AS A ROCK AND THE SWEETEST GUN PLATFORM IN THE AIR!
RATTA
THERE WASN'T A MESSERSCHMIDT, HEINKEL OR FOKKER THAT WAS HER MATCH IN THE SKY...
FOR A HURRICANE-THAT-ISN'T... YOU WHIP UP QUITE A STORM, OLD FRIEND!
BUT ONE DAY, DOWN ON THE GROUND...
I SAY THERE, BRADLEY! CAN I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU?
OH-OH... A HIGH-LEVEL EQUIPMENT OFFICER FROM THE AIR MINISTRY!

THERE'S A RIGHT WAY TO RUN AN AIR FORCE, BRADLEY, AND THERE'S A WRONG WAY. AS A SQUADRON COMMANDER, YOU KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULATIONS...DASH IT ALL, OLD MAN, YOU CAN'T FLY YOUR PRIVATE PLANE. IT JUST WON'T DO.
I TRIED TO EXPLAIN, BUT---
NO PRECEDENT FOR THIS SORT OF THING... NONE WHATSOEVER. CONFINE YOURSELF TO QUARTERS, BRADLEY, UNTIL FURTHER ORDERS.
I CONTINUED TRYING TO EXPLAIN BUT ALL THE SWIVEL CHAIR HEROES ON THE BOARD OF INQUIRY HAD THEIR EARS STUFFED WITH RED TAPE...
A FLAGRANT BREACH OF DISCIPLINE!
HIGHLY IRREGULAR
WILL NEVER DO!
RAF
HOW DID IT GO, SIR?
THUMBS DOWN, THEY ORDERED HER ENGINE REMOVED. THEY'LL "TICKET" IT FOR ANOTHER PLANE. AND THEY HAVE CONDEMNED HER HULL TO THE JUNK PILE.
NOTHING YOU CAN DO, SIR, BUT TRY TO FORGET HER.
I WOULD NOT BE TOO SURE ABOUT THAT.

THAT NIGHT--
EASY THERE, EASY...
I WAS FLYING A "STRANGER" WHEN V. E. DAY CAME...
I WAS "DEMOBBED"...
TWENTY YEARS HAVE GONE BY NOW. MY FLYING DAYS ARE LONG DONE WITH AND GONE BUT I'LL NEVER FORGET THE HURRICANE-THAT-WASN'T. HOW COULD I...?
--WE'RE STILL TOGETHER!...HER HULL HAS BEEN STANDING HERE ON MY LAWN EVER SINCE THE NIGHT AFTER THE COURT OF INQUIRY...WHEN I BROUGHT HER HOME SAFELY!
VY

HE KNEW MORE ABOUT HOW TO RUN A TASK FORCE THAN ANY MAN ALIVE. THE SEA WAS HIS CHECKER BOARD. EVERY MOVE BY EVERY BATTLE SHIP, CRUISER, DESTROYER, AND CARRIER HAD BEEN PLOTTED BY H.M. BUT IT COULD BE COLD AND LONELY ON THE BRIDGE CALLED...

ADMIRAL'S COUNTRY

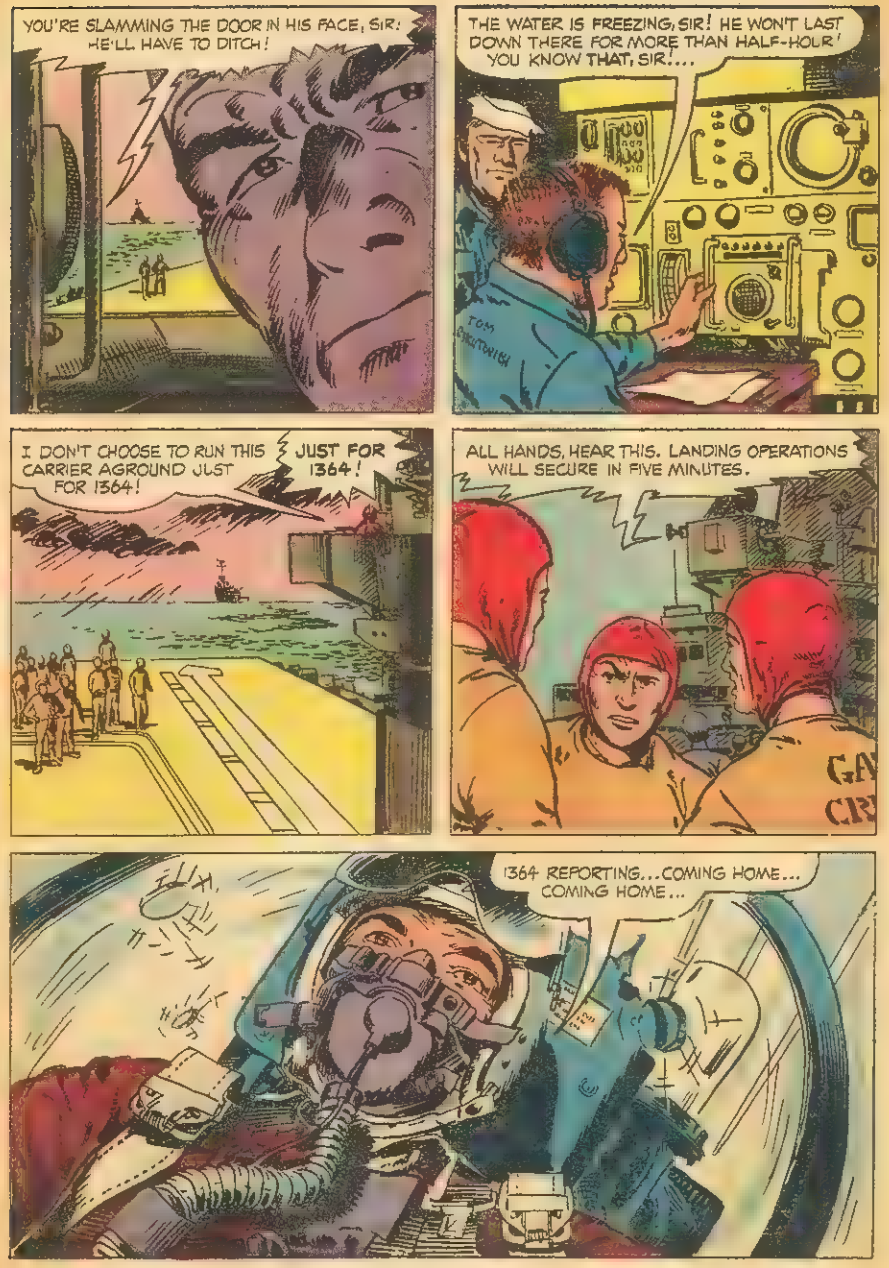
FROM HIS OWN BRIDGE HIGH ON THE CARRIER THE ADMIRAL WATCHED THE JETS COMING HOME...

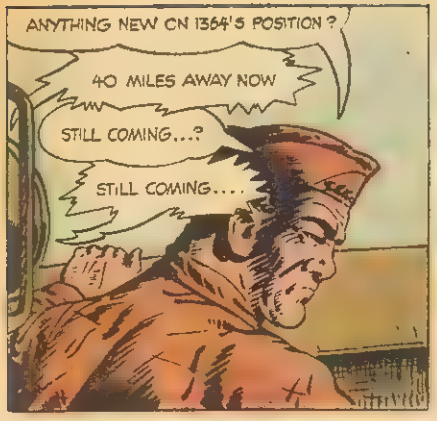
HE WATCHED THE LANDING OFFICER BRING THE PLANES IN...

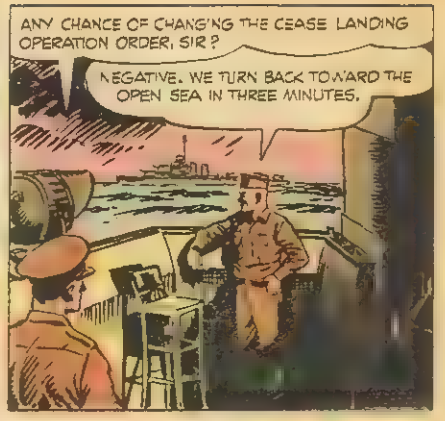
SUDDENLY FROM THE SQUAWK BOX...

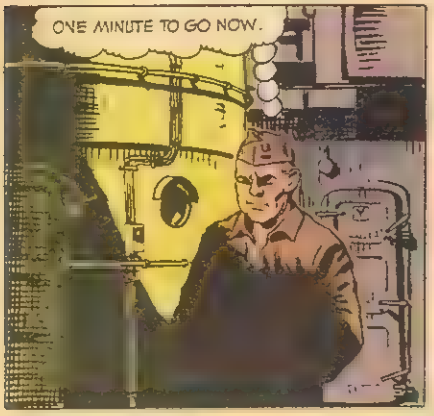
COMBAT INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR REPORTING...1364 IN TROUBLE...PLANE DAMAGED...LOW ON FUEL...PILOT REQUESTS ORDERS.

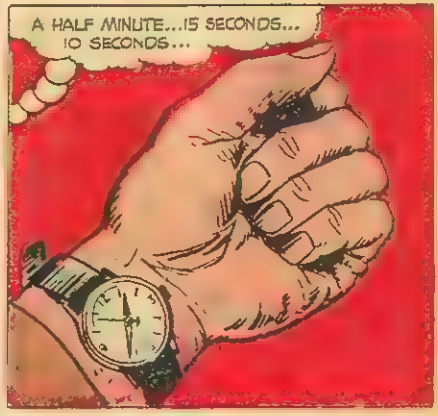
1364!...THE ADMIRAL KNEW THAT PILOT. INDEED, HE KNEW THAT YOUNG MAN WELL...
1364
NAVY
WHAT IS 1364'S POSITION ?
240 MILES AWAY. GRID, 130° SW 67°N.
WE'LL HOLD COURSE FOR A WHILE. DIRECT HIM TO COME AND ATTEMPT A LANDING.
THE MINUTES DRAG BY SLOWLY...
WIND IS HOLDING...ROUGH WEATHER BUILDING UP...
ENEMY SHORE NOT TOO FAR AHEAD. THAT MEANS SHALLOWS...SHOALS...AND MINES!
WE'RE SHAVING IT TOO CLOSE. GIVE THE ORDER TO END OPERATIONS IN FIVE MINUTES.
BUT SIR, 1364 IS STILL OUT THERE!...YOU ORDERED HIM TO TRY TO LAND.

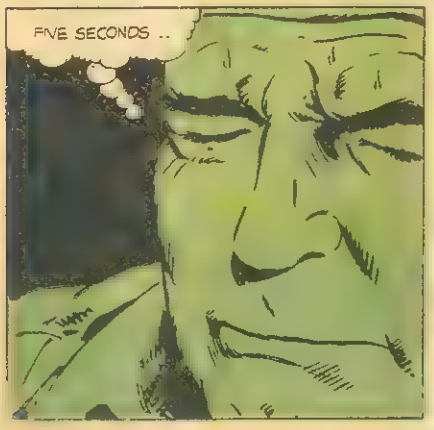

YOU'RE SLAMMING THE DOOR IN HIS FACE, SIR! HE'LL HAVE TO DITCH!
THE WATER IS FREEZING, SIR! HE WON'T LAST DOWN THERE FOR MORE THAN HALF-HOUR! YOU KNOW THAT, SIR....
I DON'T CHOOSE TO RUN THIS CARRIER AGROUND JUST FOR 1364!
JUST FOR 1364!
ALL HANDS, HEAR THIS. LANDING OPERATIONS WILL SECURE IN FIVE MINUTES.
1364 REPORTING...COMING HOME... COMING HOME...


ANYTHING NEW ON 1364'S POSITION ?
40 MILES AWAY NOW
STILL COMING...?
STILL COMING....

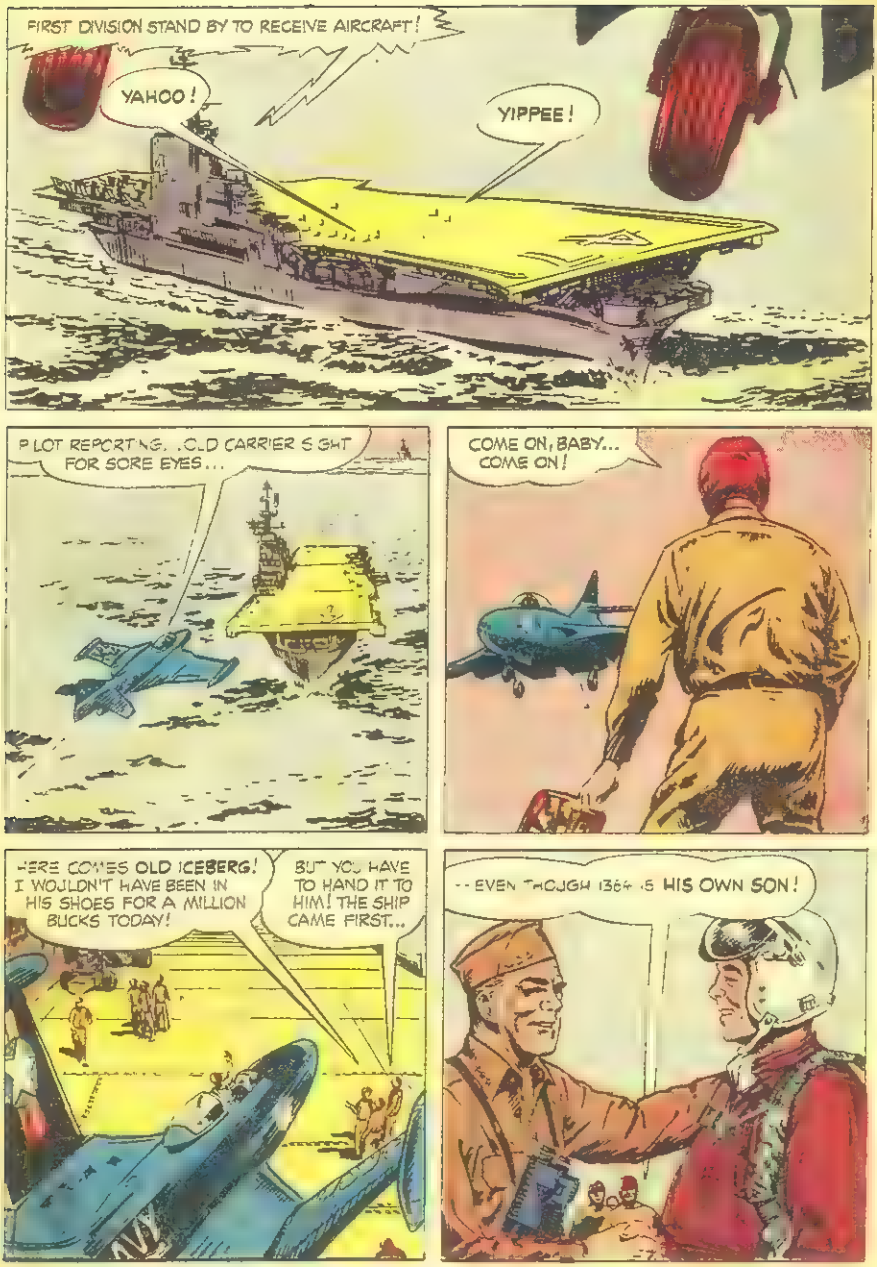

ANY CHANCE OF CHANG'NG THE CEASE LANDING OPERATION ORDER, SIR ?
NEGATIVE. WE TURN BACK TOWARD THE OPEN SEA IN THREE MINUTES.


ONE MINUTE TO GO NOW.

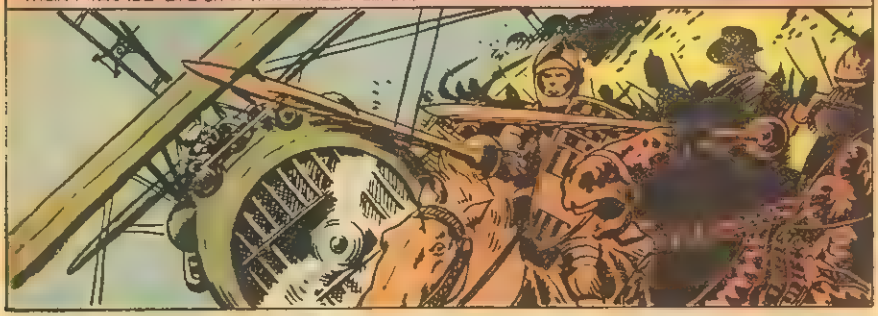

A HALF MINUTE...15 SECONDS...
10 SECONDS...


FIVE SECONDS ..

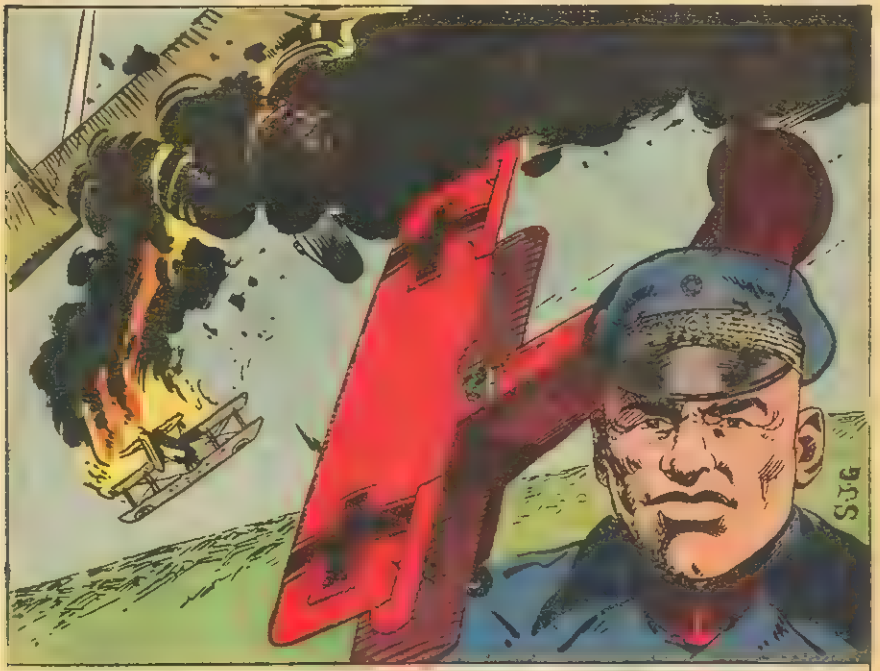
1364 APPROACHING!


FIRST DIVISION STAND BY TO RECEIVE AIRCRAFT!
YAHOO!
YIPPEE!
PILOT REPORTING. OLD CARRIER SIGHT FOR SORE EYES...
COME ON, BABY... COME ON!
HERE COMES OLD ICEBERG! I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN IN HIS SHOES FOR A MILLION BUCKS TODAY!
BUT YOU HAVE TO HAND IT TO HIM! THE SHIP CAME FIRST...
-- EVEN THOUGH HE'S HIS OWN SON!

WHAT WERE THEY LIKE--THOSE FIRST MEN TO FIGHT IN THE AIR? THEIR AVERAGE AGE WAS NINETEEN. THEIR AVERAGE LIFE SPAN WAS THREE WEEKS...



WE WERE GAY, RECKLESS, AND DEVIL-MAY-CARE. WE CONSIDERED THE AIR A FIELD OF HONOR. WE THOUGHT ALL FIGHTER PILOTS--FRIEND OR FOE ALIKE--WERE GALLANT KNIGHT ERRANTS...



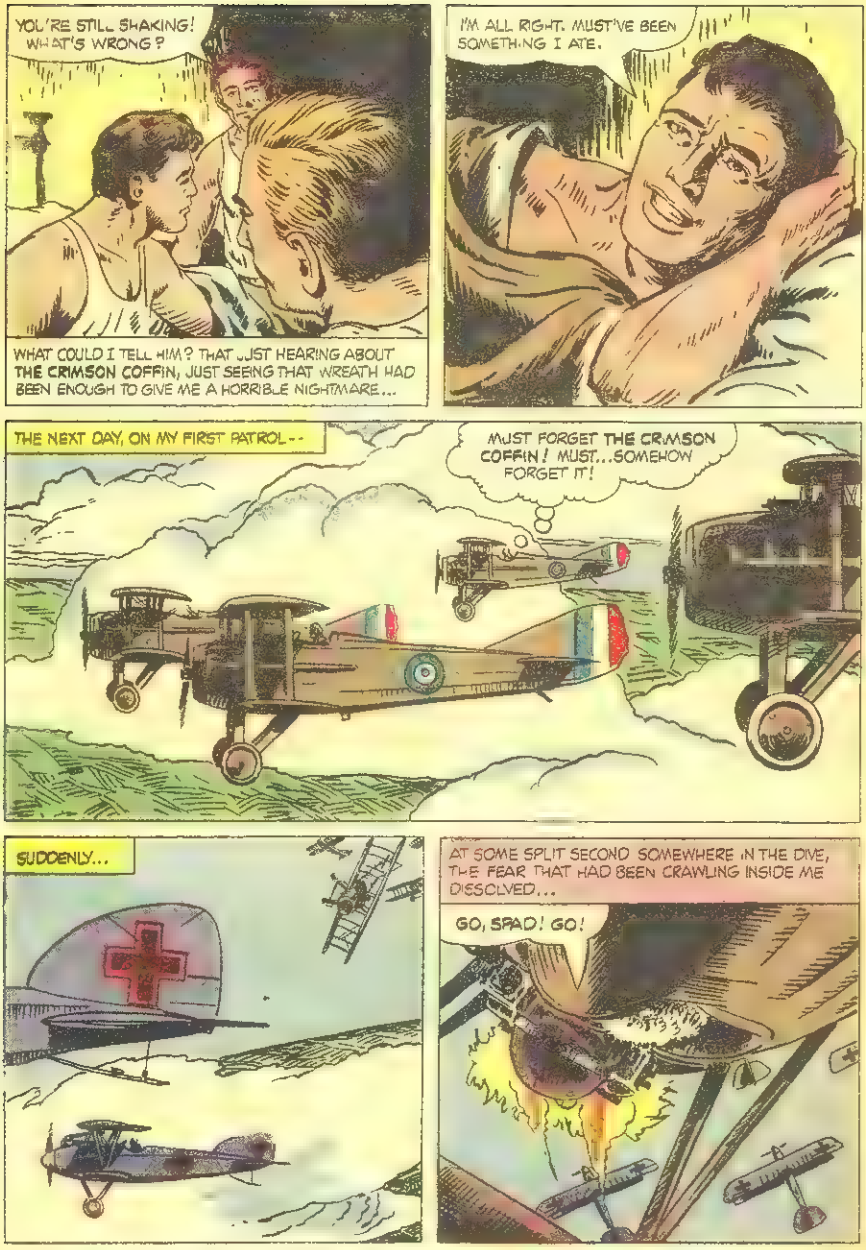
WE HAD A GRIM LESSON TO LEARN. AND OUR TEACHER WAS THE TREACHEROUS HUN WHO FLEW...

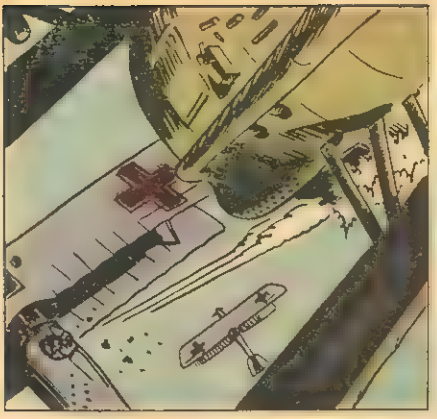
THE CRIMSON COFFIN

THE FIRST DAY I REPORTED TO SQUADRON 12...
O.K. IF I SIT HERE ?
THERE WAS A LONG SILENCE. THEN---
WHY NOT ? SURE, CHRISWELL. GO AHEAD. SIT DOWN.
THAT WAS JOE'S CHAIR. BUT HE WON'T BE BACK.
JOE SET OUT ALONE TO HUNT FOR THE CRIMSON COFFIN... AND HE'S OVERDUE THREE HOURS NOW.
!
THE CRIMSON COFFIN...?
THAT, CHRISWELL, IS WHAT WE CALL THE ALL-RED FOKKER D VII FLOWN BY BARON VON STADT!
RATTA TAT TA T
VON STADT'S THE GREATEST GERMAN ACE!
HE'S TOPS! HE'S BUILT UP AN AMAZING SCORE!
NOT A SINGLE ALLED FLYER EVER TANGLED WITH THE BARON AND LVED TO TELL THE TALE!
A TOAST, GENTLEMEN, TO THE BARON!
?!

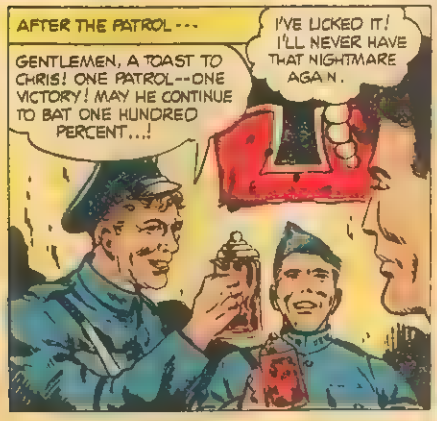
THE NUMBER ONE ENEMY AIR KILLER... AND WE DRINK A TOAST TO HIM ?!
WHY NOT ? YOU HAVE TO ADMIRE THE MAN'S SKILL!.. AND HE'S NOT WITHOUT FEELINGS! YOU'LL SEE!
SUDDENLY...
IT'S THE BARON! HE'S BUZZING THE AIRDROME!
WE WERE RIGHT ABOUT JOE! THE BARON'S DROPPING A WREATH!
DARN SPORTING OF THE BARON! EVERYTIME HE DOWNS ONE OF OUR MEN...HE NEVER FAILS TO DROP A WREATH!
WHEN I WENT TO SLEEP THAT NIGHT
THE CRIMSON COFFIN!... IT'S COMING AFTER ME!

I CAN'T SHAKE HIM!...HE'S STICKING LIKE GLUE!
RATTATATTA
RATTATATTA
RATTATATTA
ZING
SPANG
BANG
CHRISWELL
NO!...NO!
TAKE IT EASY, CHRISWELL! WAKE UP, WAKE UP!

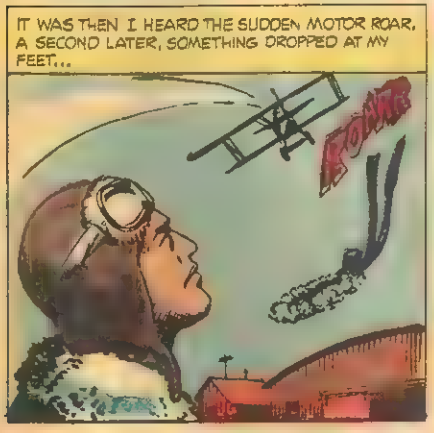

YOU'RE STILL SHAKING! WHAT'S WRONG?
WHAT COULD I TELL HIM? THAT JUST HEARING ABOUT THE CRIMSON COFFIN, JUST SEEING THAT WREATH HAD BEEN ENOUGH TO GIVE ME A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE...
I'M ALL RIGHT. MUST'VE BEEN SOMETHING I ATE.
THE NEXT DAY, ON MY FIRST PATROL--
MUST FORGET THE CRIMSON COFFIN! MUST...SOMEHOW FORGET IT!
SUDDENLY...
AT SOME SPLIT SECOND SOMEWHERE IN THE DIVE, THE FEAR THAT HAD BEEN CRAWLING INSIDE ME DISSOLVED...
GO, SPAD! GO!



AN ALBATROSS EXPLODED BEFORE MY GUN AND TWISTED EARTHWARD...


AFTER THE PATROL---
GENTLEMEN, A TOAST TO CHRIS! ONE PATROL--ONE VICTORY! MAY HE CONTINUE TO BAT ONE HUNDRED PERCENT...!
I'VE LICKED IT! I'LL NEVER HAVE THAT NIGHTMARE AGAIN.

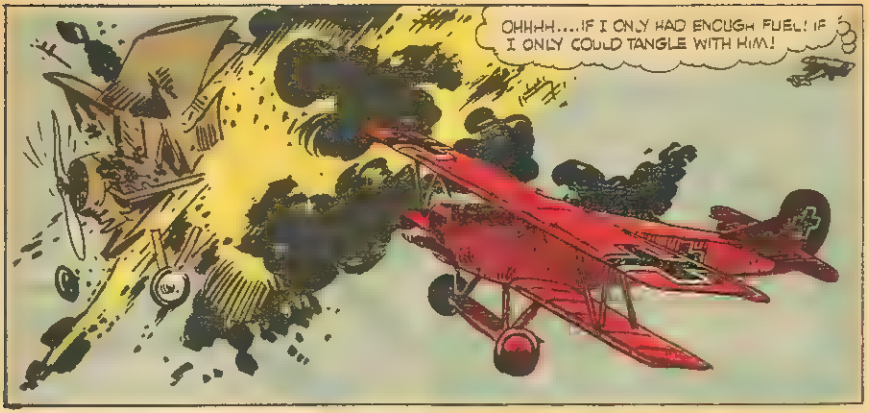
BUT A FEW WEEKS LATER--
WHERE'S SMITTY? HE COME BACK FROM THAT SOLO MISSION YET?
NO, SIR. I HOPE HE HASN'T MET THE BARON!

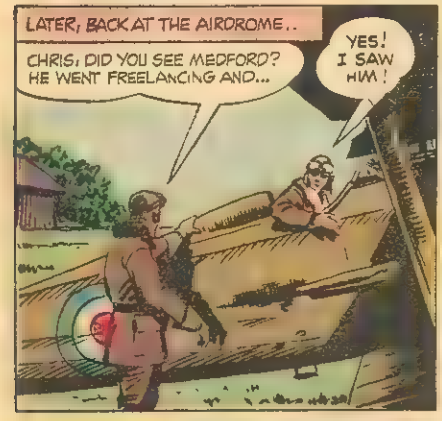

IT WAS THEN I HEARD THE SUDDEN MOTOR ROAR. A SECOND LATER, SOMETHING DROPPED AT MY FEET...
ROAR

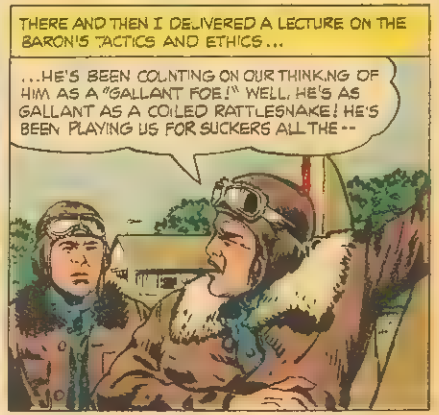
AND THAT NIGHT, AGAIN--
NO!...NO!
RAAR
RA

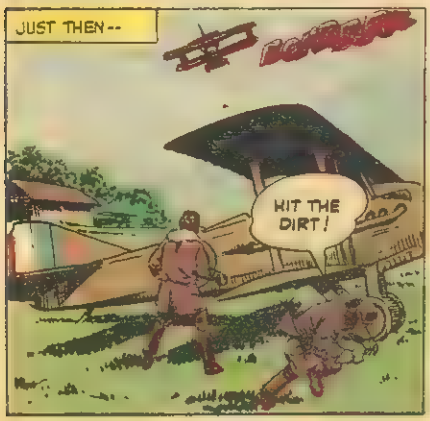
THE NEXT MORNING---
WHAT'S EATING YOU, CHRIS? YOU LOOK LIKE SOMETHING THE CAT DRAGGED IN!
I'VE BEEN THINKING--AND I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS I WANT ANSWERED...
HOW COME WE NEVER SEE BARON VON STADT WHEN WE GO UP ON PATROL? WHAT ARE HIS COMBAT TACTICS? WHAT MAKES HIM SO INVINCIBLE?
SORRY, CHRISWELL, BUT I CAN ONLY ANSWER TWO OUT OF THREE! ..THE BARON NEVER SHOWS WHEN THERE'S A FORMATION AROUND! HE FLIES SOLO AND TANGLES ONLY WITH OUR FREELANCERS! SO NOBODY KNOWS ABOUT HIS TACTICS...BECAUSE NOBODY WHO FOUGHT HIM PLANE-TO-PLANE EVER CAME BACK ALIVE!
182
5207
THE WEEKS DRAGGED BY. I WAS ALL RIGHT WHEN I WAS AT THE CONTROLS OF MY SPAD .. BUT ALMOST EVERY NIGHT--
THEN, ONE DAY, AFTER A SNARLING FREE-WHEELING DOG-FIGHT--
THE FORMATION IS SCATTERED ALL OVER THE SKY! I'M ON MY OWN!

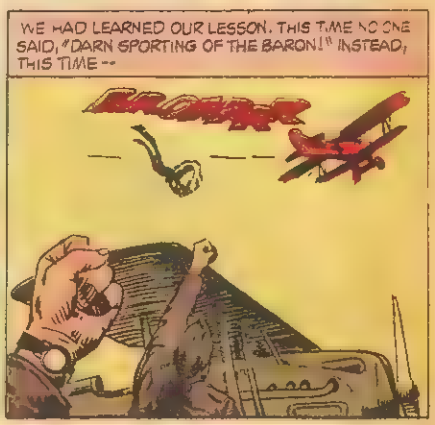
PLAYING IT SAFE, I FLEW HOMEWARD HIGH OUT OF SIGHT IN THE CLOUDS. BUT SUDDENLY THE CLOUD THINNED...
THE BARON! HE'S TANGLING WITH TONY MEDFORD!
I WAS TOO LOW ON FUEL TO TAKE A HAND. BUT I HAD A GRANDSTAND SEAT AS FOKKER AND SPAD ROLLED AND DIVED IN DESPERATE COMBAT...
RATTATAT
RATTATAT
THE BARON'S LEVELLING OFF! HE'S SIGNALLING THAT HE'S OUT OF AMMO!
MEDFORD'S FLYING ALONGSIDE HIM! THEY'RE WAVING TO EACH OTHER, CALLING THE SCRAP OFF..!
IT WAS THEN THAT I SAW WITH MY OWN EYES --
THE BARON'S TOSSING SOMETHING AT TONY--- A GRENADE!!


OHHHH....IF I ONLY HAD ENOUGH FUEL! IF I ONLY COULD TANGLE WITH HIM!


LATER, BACK AT THE AIRDROME..
CHRIS, DID YOU SEE MEDFORD? HE WENT FREELANCING AND...
YES! I SAW HIM!

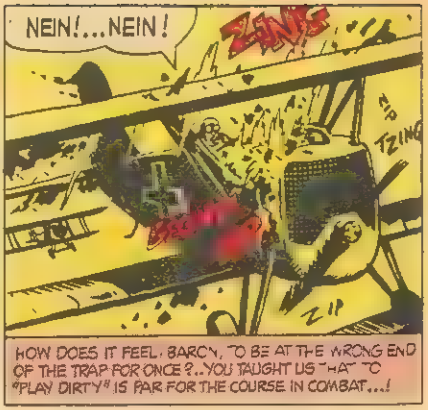

THERE AND THEN I DELIVERED A LECTURE ON THE BARON'S TACTICS AND ETHICS...
...HE'S BEEN COUNTING ON OUR THINKING OF HIM AS A "GALLANT FOE!" WELL, HE'S AS GALLANT AS A COILED RATTLESNAKE! HE'S BEEN PLAYING US FOR SUCKERS ALL THE--

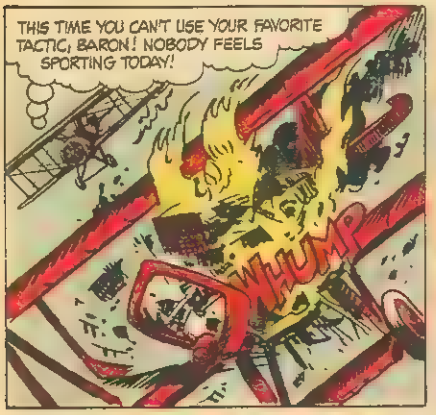

JUST THEN--
HIT THE DIRT!

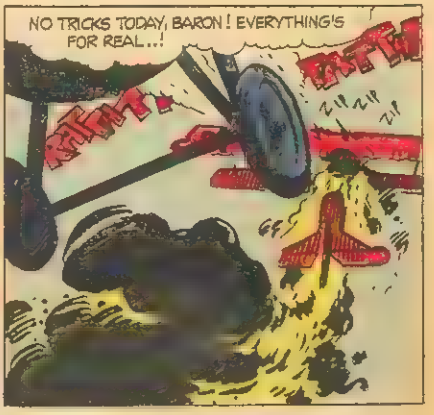

WE HAD LEARNED OUR LESSON. THIS TIME NO ONE SAID, "DARN SPORTING OF THE BARON!" INSTEAD, THIS TIME--

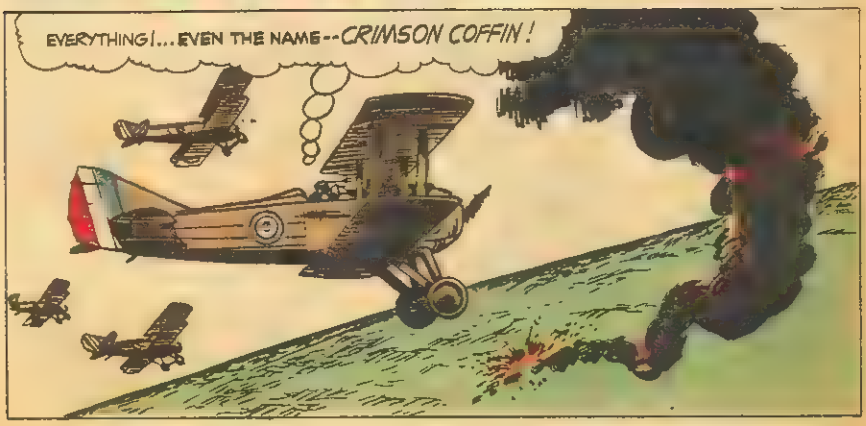
OH, YES! WE LEARNED OUR LESSON VERY WELL!... THE NEXT DAY I WAS UP AND APPARENTLY ON MY OWN AGAIN--MAKING SLOW CLIMBING TURNS A THOUSAND FEET BELOW A THICK CLOUD BANK...
THEN JUST AS IN THE NIGHTMARES--
THE BARON!
I KEPT CIRCLING SLOWLY WHILE THE BARON CAME CLOSER...
AND CLOSER
AND CLOSER...
RATATATATAT
ATATAT
RA
BEOWN
TAT
VIIIP
RATATATAT
BRATA
BRATATAT
TAT

WE PLAYED YOU FOR THE SUCKER THIS TIME, BARON! I WAS JUST A DECOY--


NEIN!...NEIN!
ZING
TZING
HOW DOES IT FEEL, BARON, TO BE AT THE WRONG END OF THE TRAP FOR ONCE?..YOU TAUGHT US THAT "TO "PLAY DIRTY" IS PAR FOR THE COURSE IN COMBAT...!

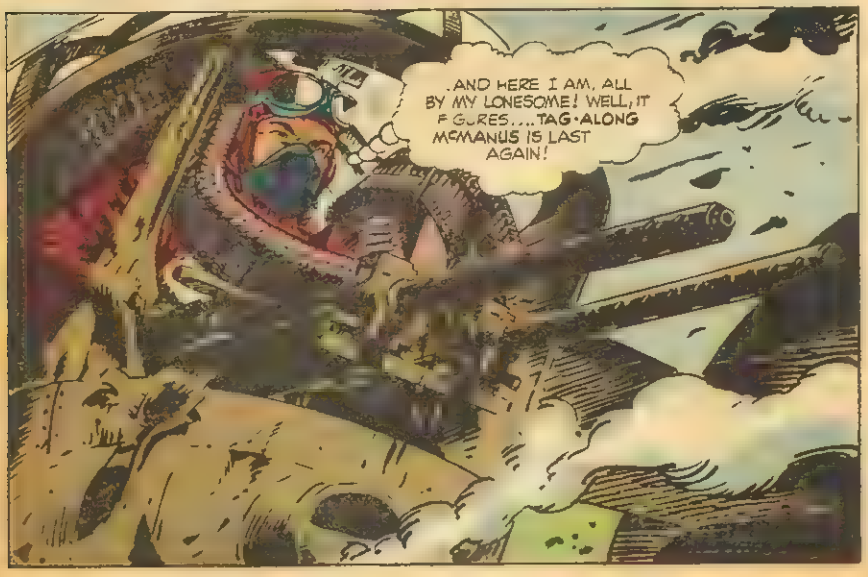

THIS TIME YOU CAN'T USE YOUR FAVORITE TACTIC, BARON! NOBODY FEELS SPORTING TODAY!
WHUMP


NO TRICKS TODAY, BARON! EVERYTHING'S FOR REAL...!
RATT!
ZIP ZIP ZIP


EVERYTHING!...EVEN THE NAME--CRIMSON COFFIN!

TAG-ALONG TAKES OVER

THE BIG-BELLIED BOMBER IS BATTERED AND SHATTERED..
FLAMES ARE LICKING THE BLACKENED SKIN OF THE WING...
IT'S A FLYING SIEVE...POMMELED AND RIDDLED...
S.J.G.



ALL MY LIFE I WAS LAST! A BORN LOSER AND A TAG-ALONG! A JOHNNY-COME-LAST--THAT'S ME!

I WAS LAST WHEN I TRIED OUT FOR THE TRACK TEAM IN HIGH SCHOOL...

LAST WHEN I TRIED OUT FOR BOXING IN COLLEGE...

AND WHEN I JOINED THE A.R CORPS, WHAT DID THEY MAKE ME? A REAR GUNNER!.. SO I WAS LAST AGAIN!

THAT'S HOW COME I WAS LAST TO KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING ON TODAY'S MISSION! A 20-MM CANNON SHELL HAD KNOCKED OUT THE INTERCOM SYSTEM--AND YOURS TRULY NEVER HEARD THE ORDER TO...

EVERYBODY! HIT THE SILK!

BLAM

SO NOW HERE I AM, ALL BY MY LONESOME IN A B-24 THAT'S PUNCHDRUNK WITH BATTLE DAMAGE...

WHEW! LUCKY THE PLANE'S ON AUTOMATIC PILOT! IF NOT, I'D HAVE BEEN SCATTERED ALL OVER THE LANDSCAPE LONG AGO!

WHAT A SHIP! AFTER ALL THAT PUNISHMENT, SHE'S STILL FLYING! TOO BAD SHE NEVER GOT TO COMPLETE HER MISSION!

THAT MUNITIONS PLANT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO PLASTER MEANS A LOT TO THE ENEMY! THAT'S HOW COME THEY THREW UP SO MUCH FLAK!
--WE ALMOST MADE IT, TOO! THE DUMP'S JUST BEYOND THOSE HILLS!...TOO BAD!
WELL, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO! BETTER JUMP WHILE---
THAT AMMO DUMP MEANS A LOT TO THE ENEMY...
IF I CAN ONLY LIFT HER OVER THOSE HILLS! UNNNNH!
I DID SOMETHING WRONG! SHE'S GOING DOWN TOO FAST, I'LL NEVER CLEAR THE TREES!

IF YOU CAN'T CLEAR 'EM...TAKE 'EM ALONG FOR THE RIDE!
THERE'S THE PLANT...EASY, BABY, EASY!
UNHAPPY LANDING, ALL YOU KRAUTS BELOW!
ALL MY LIFE! AND TODAY I WAS LAST AGAIN! BUT AT LAST I MADE IT PAY OFF!...TODAY TAG-ALONG McMANUS TOOK OVER!

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